Beacon Lights
For Protestant Reformed Youth

NOVEMBER — 1912

Thanks Be To God

Thanks be to God for roses rare
For skies of blue and sunshine fair,
For every gift I raise a prayer
Thanks be to God
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A Meeting of Delinquents

By the Rev. C. Hanko

Tonight we are having a special meeting, quite out of the ordinary, different from any you have ever heard of or seen. More than likely you could never really call such a meeting, since the proper evening could not be found, the weather would not be favorable, and the circumstances simply would not allow it. But we are holding such a meeting anyway—be it only in our imagination.

A stranger gathering could hardly be conceived of. Dummies fill the chairs of invited guests who failed to come. At the end of the row of these silent figures sit two young women, pleasantly chattering together like a pair of blue-jays on a limb. Yonder we see a young man, his jaws busily laboring over a wad of gum while his face wears a far-away dreamy look. Slightly to the left sits a silent figure who is bound to take no part in the discussion whatever. A shrug of the shoulder or a mumbling admittance that he is unprepared is the only part he has ever taken in any program. There are many more, but I assure you that their interest here is purely negative.

You see, we have barred all faithful and diligent society members from this group, since we are holding a meeting tonight only for chronic delinquents.

Before the atmosphere becomes too stifling and a wave of despondency overwhelms us, before the yearning for youthful vigor and enthusiasm makes this place unbearable, let's get down to business and have it over.

The purpose of our meeting is to find out just why a society has members of this kind. What reasons do they offer for their lack of interest in society activities?

If dummies could speak for those they represent they soon would explain their presence at this meeting. The one would say that he is too busy, finds it too inconvenient since he works late, does not get
his proper night rest, and just simply does not have the time to come. Another would report that he has too many outside interests, such as ball-games, bowling, skating and similar sports, which demand so much of his attention that he could not possibly be interested in a young people's society. A third would remark that it is quite a trip to the meetings, and means of transportation is a problem that he has not tried to solve.

But there are other individuals who are personally present, let them explain their peculiar attitude and actions.

The one will tell you that the meetings are dry. "There is nothing to them." But he never yet has stopped to realize that he himself has not as much as lifted his finger to make them interesting. He is still quietly waiting for someone else to do that for him.

The other will say, "Others do all the talking and I never get a chance." Yet more than likely he has himself to blame for this condition by never once as much as attempting to express his opinion.

And still another will add, "I'm bashful and do not know how to do those things. I'm afraid to speak because I don't know what to say. So count me out." But has he really given it a trial. No one suffers more than the person who never tries.

Imagine a gathering made up of nothing but delinquents. It is time we adjourn. O, for a deep breath of refreshing air out there under the starry sky. Who knows a cure for chronic delinquents? C. H.

Reading...

A Lost Art

Never before has a generation of young people gone out to face life as well versed in the three R's as in our day. Practically every one has toiled and worried over his "reading, riting and rithmetic" for at least eight years, if not longer. The man who signs his name with an X and stares at a newspaper as if it were a set of hieroglyphics is a thing of the past.

Never before have the printing presses poured out so much material for general consumption as in our age.

And yet, in spite of all that, reading has fallen into the category of lost arts.

Too often when the school days are past the school books are thrown into a corner and forgotten. A small amount of what has been learned at school is brought into practical use in daily life, the rest is swept into oblivion by the rush and bustle of our busy existence. Reading is one of the things that is soon forgotten.
That does not mean that most of us cannot distinguish one word from another, especially when the occasion demands. But it certainly is true that very few young men and women take time to sit down at regular intervals and actually enjoy some valuable reading matter. The newspaper, and then chiefly the comics, is about all the reading material that falls into the hands of some people.

The question is quite timely: do you read? If not, it is a habit worth developing, for the printed page contains a world of information worth knowing.

But I can also conceive of some who are not exactly book-worms and yet do indulge in a certain amount of reading. You may not belong to those who literally devour page after page of printed matter and drink in its contents as if their very life depended on it. and yet you might relish the thought of spending a quiet evening with a book.

For you the question would be: what do you read?

A questionnaire sent out and frankly answered by all our young people might prove very enlightening on that point. It would be interesting to note just what kind of books our young people read: what stands at the head and what is found at the bottom of their preferred list. I have no intention of sending out such a questionnaire, but it would be very beneficial for each one of us to make our own list in its proper order from the following suggestions: magazines of romance and adventure, fictions of various kinds, timely periodicals on current events, educational books, church papers and the Bible.

Particularly we should ask, how large a place does the Bible have in our lives?

But even so, there still remains the question: how do you read?

We are interested now particularly in the question how we should read those things that are definitely for our spiritual welfare.

Do we read them haphazardly, just skimming over the surface in a sort of hit-and-miss manner? Or do we put forth a serious effort to grasp what we read, to think into the subject under discussion and try to formulate our own opinion on it? Do we use this material in preparation for our society?

Do we read the Bible simply as another book, or do we approach it as the Word of God, the divine revelation of things heavenly and spiritual which abide forever? Do we read it prayerfully, filled with the desire to know God as He has revealed Himself to us in the face of Christ Jesus in His Word? Do we daily receive that Word into our hearts as the power of God unto salvation, the Bread of life for our souls?

The answers to these questions must be left to you. Think it over.
which were destined to become
puritan and separatist movements
These seeds developed into the
religion of persecution had ceased.
England when they returned, after
the return of the teachings of Calvin.
Here they implanted the teachings of Geneva, in Switzerland during the
Protestants in England, led to
the early
theology. For some of the early
theorists, the Puritans can be traced back to Calvin

The origin of many of the theolo-

sily search for it.

and did,

they would put candidly and di-

reformed people could see much

As much I am sure that all this

us of being anabaptistic would af-

though we were guilty of puritan-

sound and God-loving. Not as

much in the history and doctrine

the Calvinistic system and would

people who are truly proponents of

But we are Protestant Reformed

called bigotry and intolerance.

Lr admiring their courage and pi-o-

while others, although superficial-

unconditionally and unreservedly

blindly and worship, edifying

forevermore the "Puritan Fathers".

memorabilia. The arrival of their

most Americans are again com-

In this Thanksgiving season

by Charles W. Doezema

The Pilgrim Fathers
great and powerful under such men as Oliver Cromwell, sometime after our Pilgrim fathers landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620.

For the origin of the Pilgrims we must look to the counties of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire in southeastern England, in particular to the small village of Scrooby Community from which the Pilgrims came. These people seceded from the English church. Richard Clyfton was the first pastor of the seceders and with him as teacher, John Robinson. Robinson afterward became sole pastor, and is one of the important personages we associate with the group. William Brewster and William Bradford were two lay preachers of the group, serving at different times and are very prominent with the more important characters of the Pilgrim Fathers. Brewster is known as Elder Brewster and Bradford as Governor Bradford because he afterward became governor of the Plymouth colony in America, the latter was also their Historian.

According to Bradford's history of the Plymouth Plantation, "Seeing themselves thus molested, and that there was no hope of their continuance there, they resolved to go to ye Low Countries, where they heard was freedom of religion for all men, as also how Sundrie from London, and other parts of ye land had been exiled and persecuted for ye same cause, and were gone thither and lived at Amsterdam and other places of ye land. so after they had continued together about a year and kept their meetings every Sabbath, in one place or other, exercising the worship of God amongst themselves, not withstanding all ye diligence and malice of their adversaries, they seeing they could no longer continue in ye condition, resolved to get over into Holland as they could which was in ye year. 1607-1608"

Thus we see the state of affairs which prompted the Scrooby Congregation in the year 1607 to charge Elder Brewster with the mission, "To find them a way out of England to ye Low Countries." Brewster accordingly went to Boston and there cautiously looked about him, and made a bargain with the captain of a Dutch vessel to receive his party on board. Everything was in readiness, the Pilgrims had met at the appointed spot, but they were betrayed, arrested, and stripped of their belongings, and driven into town, a spectacle for the gaping crowd. In the town of Boston they were put into cells of the now famous Guildhall.

How the imprisoned Separatists fared is hard to say. Eventually, however, after many weeks of waiting they were all liberated, and met again to make more plans. They agreed with another Dutch-
man to take them on board at a
lonely point, a good distance from
any town. Here also everything
was in readiness for the Dutch-
man had already embarked a boat-
load of men in the ship’s skiff,
when he saw to his dismay a com-
pany of officers in hot pursuit to
take them. Seeing this, he immedi-
ately heaved anchor, sailed straight
away with the men whom he al-
ready had on board. This skiff
encountered a heavy sea, it did
reach Amsterdam, however, after
much buffeting of the waves. Im-
agine, the scene on shore: women
weeping for their husbands, others
distracted with apprehension.

The group’s historian tells us,
however, with a sigh of satisfac-
tion, “That notwithstanding all
these storms of opposition, they
got over at length, some at one
time and some at another, and
some in one place and some in an-
other and met together again ac-
cording to their desires with no
small rejoicing.”

The first stage of the pilgrimage
to the new world was now accom-
plished. Before the end of 1608 the
whole body had assembled in Am-
sterdam. They soon moved to the
city of Leyden and here they em-
barked on a prosperous period of
church life. Eleven quiet years
were spent in Holland. The con-
ditions of life were stern and hard
to be sure. But with patient in-
dustry, fighting poverty, and gain-
ning friends, they bore all cheer-
fully.

They continued all these years
under the prudent guidance of John
Robinson. Bradford calls him a
“famous and worthy man”. It was
he who was one of the last to
leave Holland in those troublous
times. It was he also who prompted
them to go to the new world. All
indications are that he certainly
was a much revered pastor of his
flock, and that he does measure
up to the devoted picture of Gov-
ernor Bradford.

The English Exiles in Holland be-
gan to realize after a while that
their posterity was in danger of
becoming degenerate and corrupt-
ed. Some children were sharing
tasks with their parents. Others,
however, were becoming soldiers
and sailors, at least taking paths
divergent from the little flock, and
beginning to lose their English
characteristics. This and also a
desire to publish the gospel to the
remotest parts of the world led the
Pilgrims to consider further emi-
gation. Holland, though a wel-
come temporary asylum, was no
permanent home for these English
exiles and their thoughts were long
turned to North America as a place
of settlement. By good fortune,
this country was then being opened
up, and it appeared as a veritable
Land of Promise to these refugees
in search of a new home.

At first the Pilgrims chose Vir-
Virginia as a place of settlement, but eventually they secured powers from the Plymouth Company and decided to sail for New England instead of Virginia.

At length the day arrived when the Pilgrims were to make the journey across the seas. They bade farewell to those that remained behind at the city of Delftshaven. Pastor Robinson with these others were to remain in Leyden till the first company had secured a lodgement on the American Continent. Many were the delays and disappointments. Troubles followed them on the waters. Repeatedly they had to turn into port for repairs. The last port touched was Plymouth for which their settlement in America was named. From here they sailed in the ship, the "Mayflower".

In such a ship this trip was indeed a hazardous undertaking. It was not until two whole months had been spent on the turbulent waters, that on December 21, 1620, out from Plymouth the Mayflower rounded Cape Cod, and dropped anchor in the placid waters of Provincetown Harbor.

"The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock bound coast:
And the woods, against a stormy sky.
Their giant branches tossed."

These stirring words of Mrs. Hemans very fittingly describe the scene. We can easily imagine with what wondering awe the Pilgrims gazed out over the stretch of water upon the strange and newly found land. Strange indeed must it have seemed to their unaccustomed gaze, this beautiful but unsettled wilderness of wood and rock. What mingled fears and hopes must have smitten their breasts when they thought for instance upon the savages that were known to exist, and that might have to be encountered with an arm of flesh.

The Mayflower rode at anchor, while exploring parties were made to discover a suitable place of settlement. While at anchor also these prudent folk drew up the first charter of self-government, the famous Mayflower Compact. It was subscribed to by all the male members, numbering forty-one.

The early struggles of the little group and the hardships they had to endure form a story of terrible privation and suffering but also of heroic endurance and self sacrifice.

To these unaccustomed Englishmen so long cooped up in the Mayflower, added to this their late arrival in mid-winter, the cold and bleak New England shore offered a terrible situation as far as health and climatic conditions were concerned. And death reaped a rich harvest in their midst. One is touched to read of the graves that
had to be leveled and grassed over for fear of the prowling Indians who should discover how few and weak the strangers were.

Bradford writes, that they “built a fort with good timber, both strong and comely, which was of good defense made with a flat roof and battlements”. Here they kept constant watch, and this was also their meeting house.

The following well known, but picturesque scene describes the pilgrims going to church. “They assemble by beat of drum each with his musket or flintlock, in front of the Captain’s door. They have their cloaks on, and place themselves in order, three abreast, and are led by a sergeant without beat of drum. Behind comes the Governor in a long robe, beside him on right comes the preacher wearing his cloak, and on the left the Captain, with his sidearms and cloak, and a cane in his hand.”

Such is the noble and inspiring picture of the landing and first settlement of the Pilgrim Fathers. These were guided “not out of any new fangledness, or other such like giddie humor by which men are oftentimes transported to their own hurt and danger, but for sundrie weightie and solid reasons”, as Governor Bradford so quaintly expresses it.

Which picture may well serve to inspire us; who live in a day when men also are led by reasons of expediency and material needs rather than by reasons of principle and the fear of God in spite of great hardships and material loss.
Book Reviews

By Mrs. L. Doezena

The Mystery of Mar Saba
by J. H. Hunter

Jerusalem is the city in which most of the action of this novel takes place. The Nazi government has a plot to upset the entire Christian world by having a document cleverly forged to show that the resurrection of the Lord did not actually take place, but that His body was taken away, out of the sepulchre. The document is written in the form of a confession by the person who did away with the body, and is written so accurately and cleverly that when it is discovered by a famed archeologist it is believed to be authentic and threatens to overthrow the faith of millions of Christians all over the world. The main character is a sleuth who finally solves the mystery and proves the document to be a farce.

As you can almost see from my brief summary of the story, the whole plot is rather fantastic, almost too much so to be exciting, for while you are reading, you are apt to be saying to yourself, "Oh, that couldn't happen". There are also incidents in the book which are a bit overdrawn. The main character has altogether too many narrow escapes, from which he miraculously emerges with his life. At almost every turn in the story he is fired at or attacked in some other way.

This novel has some Arminian tendencies. There are also a few of those conversions which Arminians seem to delight in as well as a few statements which give the impression that the author is a premillennialist: for one of the reasons for the importance of solving the mystery and causing a better understanding between the Jews and Arabs in and around Jerusalem is to make the Holy City ready for the time when the Lord shall establish His Kingdom there during the time when He shall, according to the premillennialist, reign on this earth.

Christian mystery novels are a scarcity, however, and those who like a mystery with a good deal of action will find it in this book. There are a few very good descriptions and one senses a little of that oriental atmosphere.
Dear Fellows:—

The Staff of our Beacon Lights asked to me to write a monthly letter to our young men in the service, as a contribution to our young people’s publication. This invitation I gladly and readily accepted. It gives me an opportunity to remain in touch with all of our young men, not only of the Fuller Ave. Church but of all our churches.

If this form of correspondence is to be a success, however, it appears to me that it ought not be entirely one-sided. You fellows who receive this general epistle, and read it, should let me hear from you occasionally. Tell me about your experiences and your impressions of army life. Let me know a little about your daily life, what you are doing, how you like it, what are your surroundings, how you spend your time off, especially your week ends, etc. Especially would I like to know a little about your religious environment whether you have an opportunity to attend services in some church or chapel, and what kind of preaching you hear. I could probably make use of some of the material you write me. I promise, of course, that I will not publish your names, unless you expressly state that I have the right to do so. That will make our correspondence more real than if I have to do all the writing all by myself.

You must bear in mind, that I am writing from Grand Rapids, even though my letter is intended not only for our Fuller Ave. boys, but for all the young men of our churches. Nor do I object to your letting other fellows read this letter, if they should appear to be interested. But the fact that I am writing from Grand Rapids will naturally lend a bit of local color to my epistles, especially if I should happen to insert a bit of news. You will have to excuse this.

A rather large number of our young men have left already. We have missed you on Sunday, in the service, already for some time. But now the season has started when everything is in full swing: catechism, young men’s society, choral society and everywhere your absence from us is felt. You can imagine, then, that we are constantly reminded of you. Not a day goes by that we do not think about you, and wonder how you are. And that means, too, that we constantly remember you in our prayers. All our ministers pray for you in their public prayers as well as in their personal supplications. But I am sure, that this is true, not only of our ministers, but also of all our people. We pray above all that our God may keep you from all temptations, may make you faithful to your Christian calling, and may strengthen, encourage and comfort your hearts in your present position in the world. And we know that whatsoever we pray according to His will He will give unto us. May your own prayers daily meet ours before the throne of grace!

Yours with Christian love.

Rev. H. Hoeksema
Dear Editor:

I received the October issue of "Beacon Lights" and it certainly was a pleasant reminder of past associations with development of our own paper. In this issue you requested that the Service men write a letter to share their experiences with our friends at home. Hence this letter.

The writer has been in the U. S. Army for some time. We have been very fortunate in that we can continue to live at our own home and we are not subject to rigorous military drilling or discipline and we probably will continue to live and enjoy the privileges of civilian life for some time to come. Naturally our work and movements come under the category of military secrets, hence, we cannot discuss them.

Since I left Grand Rapids, I have met several of our boys from Fuller Ave. who are now in the Pacific war area. It is of no small significance that some of these men were met in a church where they had gone to worship and to hear the Word.

The peculiar problem of us who are in the Service and who hold the Reformed faith high is to find a suitable place to worship according to the principles we believe. As a rule the average American church is very far removed from our Reformed ideals and we have difficulty in finding an orthodox evangelical church in the vicinity of our military posts. However a number of us who have been in the Service have found churches and preachers, usually of Presbyterian origin, who are quite faithful to the traditional Reformed doctrines. I feel that such information might be helpful to others who are about to enter the Service in the near future, especially with a view to the legislation which will bring the 18 and 19 year old boys into the Army.

Allow me to suggest that the Federation Board set up some means of distributing this information either thru "Beacon Lights" or some other means. To start this list, we submit the following churches whose pastors are orthodox in their teachings.

1. Park St. Congregational Church, Boston, Mass.
2. Arlington Presbyterian Church, Baltimore, Md.
3. Broadway Presbyterian Church, New York, N. Y.
4. Bible Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Del.
5. Orthodox Presbyterian churches in Philadelphia, Pa. area.

We feel that this list can be greatly increased if all those who are in the Service will contribute their findings.

In conclusion, we who are in the Service solicit your prayers that we may receive grace to persevere unto the end in our calling before God and men in spite of increasing dangers and temptations.

Your brother in Christ
Homer G. Kuiper
U. S. Signal Corps
Each year the plants spring forth anew,
Scattered far from where they grew.
For seeds are travelers, you know
Transported by animals, to and fro.

In the last issue of the Beacon Lights the two agents of seed dispersal discussed were birds and insects. This article will be a continuation of the same subject treating two other means of seed distribution, namely: animals and inherent mechanical devices.

To our surprise, we may discover in the plant kingdom many “hitch-hikers”. One of the most successful is the cocklebur, which is oval shaped about the size of a grape and covered with many hooked spines. There are two interesting facts to consider in the dissemination of this seed. During the process of seed ripening, these little spines lie flat and are covered by protectors; thus making it impossible for them to become attached to any passing object until they are mature. When they are fully developed however, the protectors are cast off and the spines straighten, becoming rigid. Very soon some animal passes this burr which is all prepared to “catch a ride”. The journey may be a long one, for frequently, the rider remains nestled in the fur of the transporter for an indefinite period, and the goal reached may be miles away from the original home. The other factor insuring plant distribution is rather unusual, for there are two seeds of different size within the burr; the larger will develop the following spring while the smaller remains dormant until the second year.

Quite similar to the cockle burr is the burdock, whose spiny fruit consists of thirty to forty seeds each armed with incurved barbs. While riding with its host it gradually disintegrates so that the seeds are scattered at various times in different places.

Undoubtedly, many of you have
seen the beautiful yellow flowers of the burr marigold during July and August. Their abundance of nectar causes them to be a favorite of the honey bees. In spite of its attractiveness and sweet scent, it is, in reality a very persistent and annoying weed, which produces clusters of burr-like seeds. Because the seeds are each armed with two teeth in the shape of a fork, they are nicknamed "pitch forks" or "Spanish needles".

A less familiar "hitch-hiker" is the "puncture vine", which is a roadside menace in many western states. As the burr consists of two sharp spines, each about the size of a carpet tack, it frequently proves to be a hazard for automobiles, as it becomes embedded in the tires and remains a "passenger" until it is removed.

Certainly, you all can identify the common sand burr and the "stick tight", whose projections make it possible for them to cling tenaciously to anything with which they come in contact.

There are many interesting examples of plants which distribute their seeds by devices innate such as the explosive type, or the squeezer, or the twister. They have been created with internal means of dispersion and do not depend on other agents to scatter them about.

In Central America and the West Indies, we find a large peculiar specimen known as the sand-boy tree, which produces fruit about the size and shape of an orange. The fruit consists of several large cells, each of which contains a seed about the size of a bean held by an elastic fiber. When the fruit is mature the individual cell explodes with such terrific force and noise that it resembles the firing of a pistol. Anyone within range at the time of the cells bursting, may even become blind if struck directly in the eye by one of these expelled seeds. One inhabitant of Jamaica who had just recently moved to this island was alarmed during the night when he heard a succession of shots in his garden. Because of the unstable condition of the government due to rebellion at this time the individual was much perturbed. Immediately, the next morning, he searched for evidence of the rebel in his own yard. However, he found no clue, until, suddenly he heard another shot, and, turning abruptly, he saw the sand-box tree in action, seeds were flying in all directions.

Another example of the explosive fruits is the squirting cucumber, which is a small ground-like fruit enclosed by a hard outer rind. Within is a pulpy liquid mass of seeds. While the seeds ripen, new cells develop just below the rind. As this process continues, the pressure is constantly increased, and at the same time, the stem grows inward forming a cork-like stop-
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per. At last the seeds reach maturation and the pressure is intense. Pop! Suddenly the stopper gives way and a multitude of seeds come gushing out. Once again nature’s goal is reached: seeds are dispersed.

The witch-hazel bush produces woody fruits which open in two halves revealing a double throat, each of which contains dark bony seeds. As the jaws widen, the throats contract increasing the tension to such an extent that the seeds are hurled to great distances, sometimes more than forty feet.

The “touch-me-not” is a small flower whose tiny banana-shaped pads when disturbed contract and coil up in a fraction of a second releasing its seeds at once. The Latin or scientific name for it is Impatiens, meaning, impulsive, because of the rapid response to stimuli.

Perhaps, some of you readers would like to observe these things for yourself. Wouldn’t it prove fascinating to see this type of seed dispersion. Your specimen could be the common violet which explodes its seeds during November. The violet capsule is divided into three canoe-like valves within which are numerous seeds. As the canoe sides tighten, the contents are cast forth in succession, beginning at the tip.

Probably while standing in the vicinity of a pine tree on a bright winter day, you have heard a peculiar snapping. Investigation will reveal that the cones are in action and the seeds are being released to begin new life—new generations of pine trees.

If we would observe and study these many amazing things in nature, which go on year after year an decade after decade, we could greatly enrich our lives. Never should we consider these manifestations of Gods’ miraculous power and providence as “ordinary” or “commonplace”. Let us take time this autumn and winter to investigate the methods of seed dispersal in our own vicinity. Which types can you find?

“There is not a fruit or a seed, even of one of our commonest plants, which would not amply justify and richly reward the most careful study.” —Sir John Lubbock
The Draft Muddle...

Almost everyone is convinced that there has been a great deal of bungling in the execution of the draft-law. The activity of the various draft boards has been marked by glaring inconsistencies with a view to both classification and deferment so that the impression that has been made on the general public is one of apparent instability and arbitrariness as far as the draft boards are concerned. That there would be some complaints was to be expected; it is hard to satisfy everyone and even when the way of right and justice is rigidly adhered to, without fear or favor, there is bound to be someone who feels that he has been done a gross injustice. That is always to be expected. But that the complaints should be so numerous and that there should be so many "strange adjustments" was not expected. There is every indication to believe that the draft machine was not properly organized at the very outset. In some respects the local draft board has received too much power, in other respects too little power. The result has been that in some localities married men have been called into service, while in others there are still many unmarried men available: in some homes one or two sons, who were sorely needed for the maintainence of the family, are gone, while in other homes a young man, who does not contribute to the maintainence of the family, is still free. All this should have been avoided.

There is also room for criticism of the central organization. For one thing there has been entirely too much loose talk on the part of the various committee members. All kinds of conflicting rumors and reports are rampant. One day someone will report that married men are to be called in the near future. The next day another states that no married men will be needed. That is merely an example. But it is evident that the whole thing does not work for unity amongst the people in general. No one really knows where he stands as far as the draft is concerned. And that in itself is all right. But why cause him a lot of worry and grief by circulating all kinds of unfounded reports?
Teen Age Draftees...

In the light of what we wrote above, one can never be certain of any report. But it does seem likely that the draft will be made to include men in their teen age, even before the coming election. In the last number of Beacon Lights we wrote that in all likelihood this would be the case after the next election. However it seems now that, through pressure of the President, this will soon be made a law.

This is of vital significance for many members of our societies. Many of our societies have felt the loss of members called into the service. In some the male membership is in the evident minority. And now it seems as though that will become worse. In some cases the young peoples' society may actually become a young ladies' society as far as the greater part of its active membership is concerned. But we trust in such a case the young ladies will carry on.

Even more vitally concerned are many of our young men of teen age. Many carefree hearts will be pressed into the grim service of death. May God give them grace to face this thing with Christian fortitude and may He also prepare them at this early age to put all their confidence in Him and may He give them the certain knowledge of faith that they belong to their faithful Savior Jesus Christ, in life and in death. To them also comes the urgent call, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...” Of course, we should always do that, but the need of it becomes so much more urgent when we stand face to face with eternity.

From the Editors Desk:

This year, the Executive Board is making it a Federation project to send BEACON LIGHTS, free of charge to all our Boys who have been called to the Colors. So Societies, Parents, Friends, send in the names of your Boys in the Service.

Donations for this cause will be greatly appreciated from societies and also individuals interested in sending our Protestant Reformed Young People's Magazine to our Boys away from home. We have been assured by many of them that they read, enjoy and appreciate this literature. Mail your contributions to: BEACON LIGHTS, SERVICEMEN'S FUND, 706 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Donations have already been received from:

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THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
Bible Study

by the Rev. Peter De Boer

Outline V
ABEL'S BETTER SACRIFICE
1st week of Nov.

Heb. 11:4:— —

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. Compare also Gen. 4.

As the writer of Hebrews 11 leads us down the long corridors of the Hall of Heroes he mentions Abel first of all. Abel was killed for his faith, and his case is the first clear and outstanding illustration of faith as the substance of things not seen, the evidence of things hoped for.

We ought to note that the text draws a comparison between the two men, one of whom possessed faith while the other did not. Naturally if we possess the faith that is an evidence of things not seen we will reveal this in our lives. Faith must manifest itself for it is a life principle, and so he that possesses it is controlled not merely by the world he sees but also and much more, by the unseen world of spiritual things. How Cain revealed that he did not have faith, and how Abel revealed that he possessed it is shown in the present passage.

ABEL IN CONTRAST TO CAIN

Cain and Abel were brothers. It has been suggested—and it is not impossible—that they were twin brothers like Jacob and Esau.

The conjecture rests upon the fact that in Gen. 4 we do not read before the birth of Abel the customary words, “And Adam knew his wife” while these words are used in connection with Seth’s birth. If this conjecture be true, then the spiritual antithesis would be brought in the domain of the
closest brotherly relationship conceivable, the same as in the case of Jacob and Esau.

It is certain that Cain was endowed with the greater natural gifts. He must have been physically the stronger, as his murder of Abel would seem to indicate. This may also be concluded from the names of the two sons: Eve calls the first, "Cain", and says "I have gotten a man from the Lord", while the second son calls to her mind the frailty and vanity of human existence and she called him Abel, breath or vanity, weakling. This may also be gathered from their occupations—Abel chose the quiet pilgrim life of a shepherd, but Cain turned to the earth to grapple with the curse of the ground and to labor toward the development of the things of the world. These same traits of Cain become evident in his generations, for his children are men of power and talent who focus their attention upon the world's business to become famous and powerful. This difference between the first two sons is also characteristic of all history. It is not the children of God generally who are endowed with the greater natural gifts. The strong and the noble are usually not found in the circle of God's people. And this is undoubtedly so, because it is God's purpose to put to naught the wise and great things, that no flesh may glory before him.

From a spiritual point of view, we must remember three things. First of all, Cain as well as Abel belonged in the historic, external sense of the word, to God's covenant people, even though Cain was a stranger to its fellowship and life. Both were born of covenant parents and as such were in the external sense of the term covenant children. Both had the same direct traditions and revelations, and the same training. Secondly, we may also add that Cain and Abel both were religious men, at least apparently. This is often forgotten, and the impression left that Cain was the sort of a man who if he were living today would be put behind the prison bars. However, this conception is evidently wrong. Essentially, of course, he was a wicked person and there was a fundamental difference between Abel and him. But he was not what we would call in everyday terminology a criminal. As a matter of fact, he was so religious that he also brought an offering to the Lord. In Gen. 4 Cain is even mentioned first in this respect. Therefore Cain must be classed with people who wish to be considered as those that fear God. Thirdly, we must not overlook the fundamental difference between the two brothers. The difference was as great as that between light and darkness, between faith and unbelief; Abel was a child of grace and
Cain was not. Abel saw things which Cain did not spiritually perceive; Abel hoped for things Cain was not interested in. Surely what Abel perceived was his own sin, God's righteousness and wrath, and the promise of redemption. Adam and Eve must have spoken of the coming of sin, Abel believed while Cain mocked the reality of sin. Cain did not admit God's righteousness and wrath upon him, but Abel did. As to the promise, Abel surely believed and hoped on it, while Cain had no need of it and despised it.

**His Better Sacrifice**

The words "a more excellent sacrifice" taken by themselves could be taken to mean that Cain's offering was also good, but Abel's was better. The difference then would be a purely relative one—both did good, but Abel did the better of the two. Of course, you understand at once that this cannot be the interpretation. It cannot be for various reasons. The continuation of the text definitely states that Abel alone received the testimony that he did well, which could not have been the case if the difference were merely relative. Furthermore, the truth expressed in vs. 6 that without faith it is impossible to please God preclude such an interpretation. And, finally, in the light of Gen. 4 it is evident that God was not at all pleased with Cain's abominable sacrifice. We state all this because in our day the theory of common grace as propounded in some circles would exactly have us believe that Cain's offering is in some sense good. Mention is made that Cain still sacrificed, that he sacrificed to God and no: to idols, and that in so far he must then be better than the heathen. Those that thus reason forget that the knowledge of God had not yet that far been changed into the idolatry of heathenism. Cain could not yet have sacrificed to an idol of wood and stone. Certainly, he made an idol of God in his own mind when he imagined that he could please God with his sacrifice while maintaining his wicked unbelief. Finally, the Scriptures do not speak favorably of the sacrifices of the wicked. Compare Prov. 15:8, 29.

But why was Abel's the better sacrifice? According to some, the difference was merely one of subjective attitude. Then the objective sacrifices were in themselves on a par, it was only that one brought the offering in faith while the other came with his own works. It seems to us, that the difference was not only one of the subjective attitude in which the sacrifices were brought but also of the very matter of the sacrifices. Abel offered a lamb, that is, a bloody sacrifice, and thereby he showed faith in the sacrifice of Christ. He understood that without shedding of blood
there is no remission, and he expressed his own unworthiness and faith in the coming Christ by bringing this sacrifice. Cain did not believe; he acted on the basis of his own works and gifts by which he sought his righteousness before God. It is true he was no shepherd but he could nonetheless have easily secured a lamb. He did not, for he did not believe in blood theology. Thus the very sacrifices that were brought showed that Abel longed after the righteousness of God, while Cain revealed himself as ungodly.

**The Testimony Abel Received**

Abel obtained witness that he was righteous. Just how he received this we do not know. The text does not say that the smoke of his sacrifice wafted to heaven, while that of Cain’s hovered near the ground. Certain it is that he received some sort of an outward testimony that he was righteous, of which Cain was also aware. He received it by faith. By faith he offered, by faith he also received and accepted the testimony of his righteousness. The meaning is not, of course, that Abel felt himself personally better and without sin; but that before God in the sacrifice of which his lamb was typical he obtained righteousness, and carried the assurance thereof in his heart by faith.

By that faith, being dead, he yet speaketh. Abel must have spoken to Cain and explained to him that his wicked sacrifice could not be pleasing to God. Cain rejected his testimony, and in unbelief and hatred killed his righteous brother. But Abel, being dead, yet speaketh. By his faith he still testifies against the wicked and their sacrifices, and cries to the righteous to seek their righteousness in the blood of Christ. He testifies against all humanistic, self-willed religion. Dying under Cain’s anger he maintained that only in the blood is there righteousness. And God still gives him testimony even after his death. For he sent Cain forth under the curse. Abel had the victory. But only **by faith**.

**Questions:** Compare Cain and Abel from a natural viewpoint as to their capacities and talents. In what sense was Cain a covenant child? Why must Cain be classed among nominal children of God? Why cannot Cain’s sacrifice have been relatively good in the sight of God? What in your opinion was the difference in sacrifice—merely one in attitude or also one evident in the matter of the sacrifice itself? What is meant by “being dead, he yet speaketh?” Are there Cain-like sacrifices in the church today?
BEACON LIGHTS

Outline VI

ENOCH'S PLEASEING GOD

2nd week of November

Heb. 11:5:—

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Compare Gen. 5:21-24.

As a second illustration of faith as the evidence of things hoped for, the writer mentions Enoch. Undoubtedly there were many believers after Abel and before Enoch, but Enoch is chosen because he undoubtedly stood head and shoulders above them all. Three times you read of Enoch in Scripture: first, in Gen. 5:21-24: then, here in Heb. 11: finally, in Jude 14, 15. Each of these passages ought to be carefully read to a proper understanding of the case of Enoch.

WHEN HE PLEASED GOD

If you ask, When did Enoch please God? the passage of Heb. 11 answers, “before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God”. Just how Enoch received this testimony the Bible does not state. Perhaps God spoke directly to him, as he frequently did in that day. Enoch was a prophet (according to Jude) and it is not impossible that he received immediate revelations from God. However it took place, Enoch had it and believed it. He carried the testimony about with him that for Christ’s sake he was acceptable and that his walk was a sweet savor before God. Whatever then others said to him and of him, Enoch was assured in his own heart that God accepted him. Note, he had this testimony “before his translation”, that means during his life-time and sojourn on earth. That does not mean for only a few of the last years of his life either, for Gen. tells us that after he beget his son he walked with the Lord yet three hundred years, and all this time he certainly had this testimony. We might in passing emphasize that it is this testimony that we please God which the Christian must have here in this life. We can have it only by faith.

To get a correct conception of Enoch and his significance, we must try to get a picture of the times in which he lived. First of all, then, Scripture makes known that he belongs to the period of history prior to the flood. He represented the seventh generation from Adam. Reckoning on the basis of the figures of Gen. 5, when Enoch was born, his father, grandfather and great-grandfather were not only living, but even Adam. The latter died only some 65 years prior to Enoch’s translation. Enoch was of Seth’s descendants, that is,
of the generation that feared God. Secondly, the days in which he lived were days of rapidly developing apostacy and error. He was a contemporary of the wicked Lamech and his famous but ungodly sons. The amalgamation of the children of God with the sons of men (Cain's generation) was already going on. Sin was on the increase, and the world was rapidly becoming ripe for judgment. In the 365 years of his earthly life he must have seen much departure. Not only the wanton speech of Lamech to his wives in Gen. 4:23, 24 but also the strong language used in Jude 14, 15 to characterize the ungodliness corroborate this picture. As a prophet in this departing time Enoch had the testimony by faith that he pleased God.

How He Pleased God

Enoch pleased God by faith. Gen. 5 says that he "walked with God". This expression refers first of all to a most intimate communion with God, Enoch was God's friend and he clung to God with a living faith. The expression does not imply a sort of mystical, selfish communion with God. On the contrary, it implies that he was of God's party over against the wicked world. As God's friend, he defended the honor of his God and condemned the ungodliness of his age. He witnessed, according to Jude, that the Lord would come to execute judgment. This he did by faith and by faith alone. Who could see the coming judgment day with his natural eye? Enoch was convinced of it by faith. When everything seemed to be going on as usual, he spoke of the judgment although it was still centuries before the flood. He was convinced that God rewards men according to their works. Faith was the substance of things not seen, the evidence of things hoped for.

His Translation

There can be no question of it, but translation means that Enoch was taken from this earth to heaven without first seeing death. He was not, for God took him. Very likely, he was snatched from this earth when the wicked were ready to put him to death for his hateful prophecies. They sought him to kill him, but "he was not found". Certainly his generation knew also that they failed to find him because God had taken him, and so his translation was a testimony of God against the wicked world and to his faith. This translation was the very climax of the testimony that he pleased God.

QUESTIONS: Just when did Enoch live? How long was it after creation, and how long before the flood? Characterize the world of Enoch's day. What does it mean that Enoch "walked with God"? Can you see any reason why God translated Enoch without death rather than taking him to heaven by the way of death?
Outlines V11

FAITH AND PLEASING GOD

3rd week of November

Heb. 11:6:—

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

In the narrative of Genesis regarding Enoch there is only the mention that he walked with God and that he was not, for God took him. You do not read that this was by faith, as the writer of Heb. 11 asserts in vs. 5. To make plain that Enoch pleased God by faith and by faith only, the writer inserts this sixth verse. In it he lays down the general rule that without faith it is impossible to please God, and confirms and explains this rule when he adds, “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”.

The General Rule As Such

Three things seem to be included in this pleasing God. First of all, it implies that the person is accepted of God, that God is well-pleased with him. Secondly, that his duties please God, as God was pleased with the gifts of Abel and the obedience of Enoch; Heb. 13: 16. Thirdly, that such a person has the testimony that he is righteous. Of this pleasing of God the verse asserts that without faith it is impossible. This negative assertion makes the thought so much the stronger that only by faith can one please God. Apart from faith, without faith, none can.

To our mind this general rule clearly gives the death-blow: 1. To all attempts to approach God other than in the way of saving faith. Cain tried to please God without faith—it failed. The wicked Jews of Isaiah’s day attempted to please God by their works instead of by faith in Christ—it failed. Modernists try to please God by works of their own—it must fail. Only living faith makes us pleasing before God, and that not because of faith as such but because faith rests on Christ and his work. Faith adheres to these unseen things, centrally to Christ, while unbelief rejects them. 2. This general rule also seems to us quite definitely to deal the death-blow to the theory of common grace, which teaches that the unbeliever can apart from faith please God. According to this theory the wicked please God when they outwardly adhere to God’s law, etc. Jehu’s case is often appealed to. However, the rule here expressed, and corroborated among other Scriptures by Rom. 14:23 is definitely against such an interpretation. Without faith it is impossible to please him.
EXPLANATION OF THE RULE

The writer further explains this general truth and confirms it by emphasizing: (1) that he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and (2) must believe that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Anyone that would please God and carry away the testimony thereof must believe that that God is. When the text speaks of coming to God, it means a coming in the way of self-abasement, trusting that he will be received. He must believe that God is. Of course, without this fundamental faith it is impossible for man to approach to God. You must note that this verse postulates that the certainty in regard to the existence of God, that he is God, is entirely a matter of faith. Various proofs have sometimes been advanced to prove the existence of God, but none of these can prove it. A man must believe it—it is a question of faith, not of sight. God himself belongs to the unseen things. Living faith believes that He is, believes that he is God. Very likely, however, the statement of the verse does not merely regard the abstract notion regarding the existence of God, but rather regards believing that he is such a one as he has revealed himself in his Word, that he is the "I Am" made known to Moses at the burning bush, the faithful covenant God. To please God it is not sufficient merely to believe in the general existence of God, but we must believe that he is such a one as he declares himself to be in Scripture, i.e. a righteous God and a God of mercy and grace to them that come in Christ.

This much certainly must be added, he that cometh to God must believe that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". "Them that diligently seek him" refers to the same seeking of which Jesus speaks in the Sermon on the Mount when he says, "Seek and ye shall find". It is the seeking of faith after God, seeking in the way of confession of sins and trust in God's mercy in Christ. Of such God is the rewarder. They that seek find, they that knock find that God opens to them. He that would please God and be accepted of him must be convinced also of this. Doubting that truth, which though unseen is nevertheless eternally true and real, he cannot ever have the assurance that God accepts him, he will never have the testimony and conviction in his heart that he pleases God.

Only faith, faith as it is the substance of things not seen, and the evidence of things hoped for, can approach God. Without it there is no pleasing of God and no reception.

QUESTIONS: What does it mean to please God? Did Jehu please God, was he pleasing to God, when he destroyed
Ahab's house at the command of the Lord? Which arguments are often advanced to prove the existence of God? Are they proofs? How does God reward faith?

Outline VIII

NOAH'S FAITH

4th week of November

Heb. 11:7:—

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Compare also Gen. 6:8.

As another illustration from the Old Testament of the just living by faith, the Holy Spirit calls our attention to Noah. This instance may be called especially striking for two reasons. First of all, because Noah lived in dark days, days which in Scripture only find their counterpart in the dark days just preceding the return of Christ. Secondly, because Noah in his time alone of all men feared God.

A DEFINITE WARNING

The text says that Noah was warned of God of the impending disaster about to come upon the world.

The world of Noah's day was ripe for judgment. The amalgamation of the children of God with the sons of men had done its destructive work. Corruption and violence filled the earth. Only Noah was found righteous in God's eyes. One is inclined to ask, How could this rapid degeneration take place? It was hardly seventeen hundred years before that God had created the world. Undoubtedly the following factors will help to explain it. First of all the longevity before the flood, together with the great inventive genius of Lamech's sons used in the service of sin, had much to do with it. Besides, the amalgamation of which we wrote above undoubtedly played the great role in the apostacy of the church. One thing is certain, when the Lord looked down from heaven, all had corrupted their way, and only Noah and his family remained. Perhaps there was plenty "form of godli-ness," but without the power. There must have been some millions of people (if you compute the figures on the basis of the longevity and of the great fertility of the race), but only one that truly loved the Lord.

The warning of which Heb. 11:7 speaks surely refers to God's revelation to Noah of the coming deluge. Yet one hundred and twenty years and the world would be destroyed. So God spake to Noah his friend, and to Noah alone. Of course, not only Enoch but surely also others had spoken of a coming day of judgment, so
that the world was not ignorant of it. Besides, Noah preached it by
word and deed for one hundred
and twenty years, for he is called
the "preacher of righteousness". The difference between Noah and
the world of his day was not that
Noah knew the flood was coming
while the others were entirely
ignorant of it. Not at all, the dif-
ference was a matter of faith. The
world in general mocked and went
on with their sinful life, while
Noah believed.

**HIS OBEDIENCE**

When the passage says that
Noah "moved with fear prepared
an ark" we must not think of Noah
as frightened and in that fright
building an ark. The Revised Ver-
sion properly translates "moved
with godly fear". Love casteth
out fear, such fear that simply
makes us tremble. The fear of
obedience, the holy and childlike
fear is intended. And in that
obedient fear Noah prepared the
ark. What a venture of faith that
was! For one hundred and twenty
years the ark was a-building. Day
after day, week after week, month
after month, year after year, Noah
kept up the work. The world must
have mocked and laughed. But
Noah was convinced, his faith was
not to be shaken.

By this faith in which he built
the ark, Noah condemned the
world. Certainly Noah also by word
of mouth condemned their sin and
wanton rebellion against God. He
did not keep still when it was his
duty to speak. He preached right-
eousness. But Noah also did this
by building the ark. His work on
it was a continual testimony
against the world, a testimony that
as God's friend he agreed with his
God.

All this was certainly faith. For,
first of all, there was no deluge
in sight—all went on as heretofore.
Secondly, his persistence and will-
ingness to bear reproach and scorn
can only be accounted for by his
faith in his eventual justification.

**HIS REWARD**

Noah also received a great re-
ward, the reward of grace. For
himself personally, and for his
house.

For himself, for he became an
heir of righteousness, the right-
eousness which is by faith. Briefly
expressed, this simply means that
in this way of faith Noah possessed
the testimony that he was right-
eous before God. It does not mean
that he was to inherit righteous-
ness in the future, but simply that
he possessed it. Neither does it
mean that Noah was in himself
righteous, nor that his faith as
such made him acceptable to God:
but rather that God declared
Noah righteous, and that Noah by
faith accepted God at his Word.
And it is only thus that we ca,
have the assurance that we are righteous before God. God must declare us righteous, for we are not righteous in ourselves. God does that to those that believe, which faith itself is the gift of God. And, further, that faith by which the testimony of righteousness is ours is an obedient faith. Only in the way of obedience, in acting from that faith, do we have this assurance of righteousness.

For his house. Noah's faith was not vain, for he and his house were saved. Noah himself not only but also his family. That is the organic idea of the believer and his house so prevalent throughout Scripture.

QUESTIONS: Describe the general apostacy of Noah's day. Why did this degeneration take place so soon? Why do you think there were already millions of people in Noah's day? What does it mean that Noah was moved with "fear"? To what is the apostacy of Noah's time compared in Scripture and why? Why was Noah's family saved? Were all Noah's children true believers?

Outline IX

ABRAHAM'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S CALLING
1st Week of December

Heb. 11:8—By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Gen. 11:27—12:27; Acts 7:1-4.

From the illustration of Noah the passage passes on to Abraham, that great hero of faith. No outstanding individual is mentioned in the book of Genesis between Noah and Abraham. There surely were believers during those intervening years but their names have not been given prominence. The only outstanding event between Noah and Abraham mentioned in the Old Testament record is the confusion of tongues, in connection with which no names are particularly associated.

Abraham may rightly be called: the hero of faith. Scripture speaks very often of him. He assumes an important place in the development of God's covenant, and is called by Paul: the Father of Believers and by James: the Friend of God. The latter refers to his relation to God, while the former stresses his peculiar place and position in relation to the believers that followed him. Quite properly the 11th chapter of Hebrews devotes much more space to Abraham than to those that preceded him. As a matter of fact from vs. 8 through vs. 19 the discussion centers about this prominent Old Testament figure. By various instances in Abraham's life the writer shows us how faith was active and controlled the father of believers.

The verse for this evening's dis-
discussion deals with Abraham’s response of faith to God’s calling. We should note that this passage does not deal with the covenant God made with him, etc., but approaches the history from the viewpoint of the question. How did Abraham reveal faith?

When He Was Called

The writer does not say just when or how Abraham was called. If the narrative in Genesis be compared with what Stephen says in Acts 7 then there were undoubtedly two stages to this calling. The first was while Abram was still in Ur of Chaldees, and the second while he was in Harah where Terah his father died. It is not easy to show the proper relation between these events, but it is plain that Abraham was called of God. The latter receives the emphasis in Heb. 11 and not the time of it.

Neither does the text inform us just how God called Abram, perhaps it was by direct speech. One thing is plain, even though Hebrews 11 does not with so many words state it, God it was that called him.

When Abram received the call, Abram went forth. Abram’s emigration cannot then be put on a level or viewed in the same light as the emigration of others from their native land and ancestral home since his time. Some have left their native home for material improvement and gain, for social betterment; others to escape the consequences of their evil deeds, the ill name they had acquired, etc.; still others have fled their native land to escape religious persecution and to secure freedom of religion. Abraham did not go forth for any of these reasons. He certainly did not go in search of gain, even though God gave him great riches in Canaan. Neither did he go for freedom of religion—there is nothing to indicate that he did not have this in Ur as well as in Canaan. His removal can only be explained from God’s call.

Why God Commanded It

Although the present passage does not with so many words speak of it, we may well ask the question, Why did God call Abraham to go forth? Why did God wish Abraham to leave his ancestral residence? How must we conceive of Abraham before his call?

There are several explanations which must be rejected. According to some Abram was called to go forth “to preserve the true religion”. According to this interpretation the world had again apostatized since the flood, and to avoid that the pure religion be entirely lost God sent Abram out of Ur. According to this conception Ur was an entirely wicked place. However, God could have accomplished the preservation of the true reli-
region by keeping Abram and his seed in Ur or Haran as well as in Canaan. God does not physically and geographically separate his people in the New Testament, yet he keeps them: this was equally well possible in the Old Testament. Besides, if it had been God's intention to send Abraham to a less wicked place, he could have sent Abram to some uninhabited land. Actually he sent him into the densely populated Canaan, where lived the children of Canaan the son of Ham upon whom the curse of Noah had particularly devolved and who were surely very wicked. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha shows that wickedness was more advanced in Canaan than even in Ur: for the latter was not destroyed.

According to a second explanation Abram was separated because he was to be the father of the Jews, of the Jews only, and they are the people of God. Also this explanation is averse. The Jews as a nation are not the people of God. Neither will they one day return to Canaan. Nor is Abraham their father. Abraham is the father of believers, whether Jew or Gentile. The land of Canaan is not the land of promise which the Jews will again receive. Canaan was typical of the land promise, the heavenly country. The succeeding verses make the latter point very plain. Abraham was looking for the heavenly country.

To our mind the proper explanation of Abram's calling to separation is as follows: With Abraham God begins a new phase in the development of his covenant. Prior to this his people were out of all nations and all peoples. Now the covenant is limited to one nation. But only for a time, for Abram is to be the father of many nations, and all the nations of the earth are to be blessed in him. The Christ must be born. and the Old Testament typical apparatus that is to foreshadow the New Testament demands that God limit his people to one nation. that he give them his promises and typical blessings till the time of shadows has passed and the Christ come. Then the church breaks from its national shell and becomes international again. But now the Christ must come and the holy seed separated unto that end. Of course, Abram did not understand God's purposes at once, God gradually enlightened him by progressive revelation. Only one thing at the time of the calling was clear and that was that God called him to go forth.

A DIFFICULT DEMAND

God called Abraham to leave his country, his kindred and his father's house. Note the climax in Gen. 12:1. His country refers to his native land, his kindred to his tribe and family relatives, his father's house to his immediate
family. Certainly to leave this all behind was not easy. Others have left their country and kin, it is true, but it is not easy for the flesh. Surely this demand of God was not nearly as difficult as the command to sacrifice his son—the latter was the climax demand which could only come at the end of an obedient life. This first demand, however, was far from easy and demanded faith. Abram also must have considered the matter from the viewpoint of the flesh—the dangers of leaving his homeland and going into a strange country—subsequent history tells of the sinful plan in regard to Sarah that he laid while about to go. (Gen. 20:13). The arrangement he made with Sarah prior to his going not only shows that Abram saw the difficulties, but it also shows that his faith was not unmixed.

Perhaps you say that it was not hard for Abram to go for he had God’s promise. That is true. Whenever God commands something, he also promises something. Indeed God had promised to make him a great nation, to bless him, and that in him all nations should be blessed. But you must remember that his promise was spiritual and could only be apprehended by faith. Remember further that Abram had no son. that he was already past the age when Sarah and he could expect a child. Remember finally that he did not even know whither he was to go. In view of all this obedience could only be a matter of faith.

**His Great Faith**

The text says Abram “obeyed”. With that one word the writer describes Abram’s reaction. Abram did leave all and go forth, whither he knew not. That was faith. He went forth because he believed God would show him the land of his inheritance Faith alone can explain his obedience. By faith he was sure of the things not seen, convinced of the things God made him hope for.

It is well to note that faith and obedience are here coupled together. Faith implies obedience, and faith without obedience is impossible.

**QUESTIONS:**
- Where was Ur of Chaldees? Where Haran? Was Abram’s father Terah a believer (Joshua 24:2)?
- Must we look upon Ur as a godless place at the time Abram left it? Explain.
- Was Abram separated to “preserve the true religion”? Is Abram only the father of the Jews? Prove that it was merely a matter of faith when Abram emigrated. Does God call us to separate ourselves from family and friends? Was Canaan a wholly godless land when Abram came to it?

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**SERVICE MEN!! — WRITE US A LETTER!!**

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